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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 001277

SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA PASS TO AMCONSUL ADANA
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
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SUBJECT: GoG On Latest Nimetz Proposals, Language Issue

CLASSIFIED BY: Daniel V. Speckhard, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Greece's chief negotiator in the UN-led talks on the Macedonia name issue, Adamantios Vassilakis, briefed NATO and EU ambassadors July 17 on the GoG reaction to mediator Matthew Nimetz's most recent proposals. Nimetz visited Athens July 7-9 and met separately with FM Dora Bakoyiannis and PASOK opposition leader George Papandreou. Vassilakis reiterated the GoG's redlines: a compound name with a clear geographical qualifier, applicable in all cases (erga omnes). He referred participants to three speech excerpts from PM Karamanlis and FM Bakoyannis as the definitive word on the Greek position, and he said the GoG would respond officially to Nimetz within two weeks. He characterized the proposed name Republic of North Macedonia as "in the right direction," but said that the application of the name would be the key issue. Asked whether he was optimistic, Vassilakis stated that there was no timetable for the talks and he regretted to say that in his view we were not at the point where there was enough confidence between the sides to permit movement. The issue had been open for 20 years, he said, and if people expected movement without a substantive change from Skopje, they were fooling themselves. However, he also said Greece really does want to solve the problem, and when it is solved, his government would be ready to reach out to the Macedonians with favorable visa, trade and other initiatives. END SUMMARY.

POSSIBLE FLEXIBILITY ON ERGA OMNES

12. (C) While Vassilakis was clear to state that Greece's position (a compound name with a geographic qualifier and use in all international cases) had not changed, his responses to questions suggested possible flexibility on erga omnes usage. One ambassador asked whether third-party countries would be pressured to use the new name in bilateral relations; Vassilakis responded that the name should be "used everywhere" but each bilateral relationship, of course, would be based on the principle of mutual agreement and "Greece did not have a recipe" for all of these instances. Another ambassador asked whether erga omnes meant that Macedonia would be required to use the new name domestically. "I didn't say that," Vassilakis replied. He then noted that Nimetz proposed in October 2008 that Macedonia continue to use its constitutional name internally, but that the "full package" would have to be good enough for the Greeks to accept this.

"MAKEDONSKI" ON THE UN CARD

13. (C) On language and identity, Vassilakis stated that the name used on the United Nations card ("Macedonian") is not a technical issue, but rather went to the heart of the dispute. He suggested that Macedonia's UN card refer to the language as "Makedonski" rather than "Macedonian" in English. For passports, he recalled that at one time the GoG had suggested that including the Cyrillic spelling, Republika Makedonski, would be a possibility--citing EU usage of national languages as a precedent. (Note: The EU's website lists Greece as "Ellada" in both Latin and Greek script, Bulgaria in Latin and Cyrillic, "Ceska Republika," etc. End note).

14. (C) COMMENT: While Vassilakis was careful to tone down any sense of optimism in his briefing, it was interesting to note the slight opening he presented in suggesting that Greece will have no way of ensuring that all countries use the name in bilateral usage. However, this should be taken with a grain of salt. The Greeks are still firm in believing that any solution will need to be adopted

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by the U.S., EU, and the major powers. But given Vassilakis' normally tough stance, every hint of compromise is an improvement.
END COMMENT.
SPECKHARD